DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 130 968 SO 009 557

TITLE	Institutes on Ancient and Modern Studies.
INSTITUTION	Heidelberg Coll., Tiffin, Ohio.
SPONS AGENCY	National Endowment for the Humanities (NFAH), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	[76]
NOTE	29p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Civil Liberties; Classical Literature; *Community Responsibility; Democracy; Ethics; Higher Education; Human Development; *Humanities; Institutes (Training Programs); Justice; *Philosophy; *Political Science; Social Environment; *Social Problems; *Social Sciences

ABSTRACT

Readings and ten weeks of discussions at institutes about current societal malaise, problems of growth, implications of growth for freedom and justice, and the "good" society are summarized. College, university, and secondary-school participants represented the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. Focusing on current problems, institute participants examined contemporary issues from a classical standpoint. A central aim of the institutes was to enable participants to recognize the multiplicity of facets of a major issue and their interrelatedness. Also, participants were to become aware of the range of concepts that emerge in dialogue among individuals from diverse fields and that develop in the examination of a contemporary theme on classical premises. The classical premises include the interconnectedness and interdependence of all things, organic growth, equilibrium, man the measure, and the concept of the "good" community. Separate chapters discuss The Greek Perspective, The National Well-Being: Problems and Perspectives, Growth, Freedom, Justice, and Implications. A reading list of 69 books, papers, and articles is included. (Author/AV)

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Institutes on Ancient & Modern Studies

The Institutes were conducted at Heidelberg College for periods of three weeks each in the summers of 1972, 1973, and 1974, and for an eight-day period in 1975. Twenty participants (college and university professors and /in 1974/ secondary school teachers) and four staff members met for daily discussions on the current malaise, problems of growth, the implications of limits on growth for freedom and justice, and the "good" society.

Participants were selected from the humanities, the social sciences, and the sciences (principally biology); they represented a cross-section of large and small, public and private, colleges and universities, and (in 1974) of small-town, metropolitan, and preparatory schools. Staff members at one or another of the Institutes were: scientists--David Barry (Evergreen State College, now of the University of Toledo), Addison Lee (University of Texas, Austin), and Bruce Wallace (Cornell Univ.); humanists--Brooks Otis (Univ. of North Carolina), Charles Witke (Univ. of Michigan), James J. Helm (Oberlin College), and Rudolph Masciantonio (School District of Philadelphia); social scientists--Laszlo Versenyi (Williams College), William Goldsmith (Brandeis Univ.), Tom Keen (Heidelberg College), and Charles Cochran (Texas Tech Univ.).

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The Institutes were designed both to use current problems to provide a focus on the past and to examine contemporary issues from the classical standpoint; themes were selected, accordingly, which were of critical concern now (though equally so for the ancient world) but were explored from the standpoint of classical premises. A central aim of the Institutes was to enable participants to recognize the multiplicity of facets of a major issue and their interrelatedness and to become aware of the range of concepts that emerge in the dialogue of individuals from diverse fields and that develop in the examination of a contemporary theme on classical premises. The Institutes provided an actual experience in ancient and modern studies on which participants could draw in devising courses on such studies in their own institutions.

Resume of the Institutes on Ancient & Modern Studies

The accompanying packet is a resume of four Institutes on Ancient & Modern Studies (1972-1975) funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Additional funding by the Endowment has provided for preparation and mailing of the resumes to selected individuals who because of their teaching programs or interests will find them most useful.

Though careful selection was made necessary by a limited number of resumes, it is possible that someone else in your institution may be in a better position to take advantage of them. If so, we would appreciate your placing them in appropriate hands.

The resume is a highly condensed abstract of readings and of ten weeks of discussions. It inevitably smooths over differences of opinion, omits reservations and qualifications, includes few of the fascinating side-issues which provided depth and perspective to the overall theme, and streamlines complex problems. It is, nonetheless, an accurate reflection of major emphases.

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(Director, Institutes
on Ancient & Modern
Studies, 1972-1975)

THEMES

The themes of the four Institutes were selected with the intent of using current problems to provide a focus upon the past and, conversely, of examining contemporary issues from the classical standpoint. They were, accordingly, those of critical concern now (though equally so for the ancient world), but they were explored from the standpoint of classical premises.

The themes were closely related approaches to the central inquiry: what impact changing realities have on the nature and structure of democratic society and the capacity of that society to maintain itself--its quality, values, and fundamental processes--in the face of increasing pressures and responsibilities. The inquiry involved an investigation into the effects of unrestrained growth--primarily economic, industrial, and technological--on the environment and into the kinds and extent of constraint required for a sound society; it led ultimately to exploring the need, in the light of these constraints, to reassess the concepts of the public good, freedom and justice, and the healthy community.

The classical premises (basic in particular to Greek thought) which served as conceptual substrata were: the interconnedness and interdependence of all things, limit (for the individual, society, and the natural world), organic growth, equilibrium (on the levels of society and the environment), man the measure (implying, e.g., ethical relativism

and differences in ideology and cultural expression), and the concept of the "good" community.

The choice of theme was dictated, moreover, not only by its significance to both the modern and ancient worlds but because it subsumed issues to which the appropriate disciplines could contribute most authentically.

THE GREEK PERSPECTIVE

Greek thought was no more consistent than modern: Protagoras' dictum that man is the measure of all things runs counter to the belief that God is the measure; the idea of justice as inherent in the universe is incompatible with the view of justice as the right of the stronger; nature is at once the cosmos of which the city-state is a part and "human" nature, whose claims take precedence over the traditions and conventions of the polis; pride in the capacities and achievements of mankind run side by side with dark warnings that that pride will ultimately disrupt the world order.

There is, nonetheless, an identifiable mainstream which at its widest encompasses the interdependence of all things; we have, therefore, the sequence: cosmos, polis as a natural part of the cosmos, the individual by nature a member of the polis. Since all things are interdependent, they must be in some kind of balance, and a limit is therefore imposed on each since its expansion or unnatural growth will necessarily be at the expense of the others. Growth (physis) is organic--an inner development up to the limits natural to the organism or, in the case of the polis, up to the limits of unity (Plato).

Cosmos and polis are living organisms: the nexus of their relationship is the context for human freedom, justice, and wellbeing. Freedom is possible only within the limits set by the world order and the community: one is free to the extent that he recognizes and accepts these limitations. Justice, too,

cannot be conceived except in terms of the physical and social environment as a whole: it is a product of (and is sometimes defined as) the harmonious operation of that environment--a natural or healthy state of universe and community. But it is precisely within these limits that the individual attains the full potential of his humanity. Man is at the center, man is the measure--not in the subjective, relativistic sense, but in the sense that the fulfillment of his humanness is the ultimate quest.

THE NATIONAL WELLBEING: PROBLEMS & PERSPECTIVES

Because major problems--whether they bear the labels of economic, social, ecological, or political--are interrelated, the focus on any one will eventually involve the others. It was desirable, therefore, to delineate a context which would most adequately subsume the various issues and within which their interrelationship could be most clearly observed. This was taken to be the public interest; in this context two developments underlying most changes in the past century--industrial/technological growth and urban expansion--were examined.

Industrial growth raised the issue of the implications of rising demands on "limitless" resources and the one-dimensionality of purpose which ignores the ecological system as an interdependent whole. It involved also the development of a high consumption economy and of a hedonistic way of life at odds with the traditional Protestant work ethic but congenial to ethical relativity (situation ethics, in contemporary terms) and to pluralistic and subjective values. The "new freedom," however, appeared to have been accompanied by disenchantment and alienation--to have produced not self-discovery but self-obsession.

Investigation centered then on the question whether industrial and technological growth increases the standard of living and improves the lot of the poor or actually results in deterioration of the quality of life--in depletion of energy resources, in damage to the environment and upsetting of the ecological balance, in increasing rather than narrowing the gap between rich

and poor, and finally in its social effects, e.g., in making primary relationships irrelevant to economic decision-making, in failing to create new contexts of association to take their place, and in being deficient in producing public goods. These considerations raised questions regarding the need to estimate the public good on a broader base than the current economic one--to replace GNP (which does not distinguish between genuine addition to welfare and subtraction from it) with Gross National Quality to take account of non-materialistic "assets and liabilities" and values. The decline of primary relationships could be seen most clearly in the metropolises (where problems are, or seem to be, magnified), in which ties of a secondary nature have made big cities mechanistic and impersonal.

A key question, then, was that of regulating "linear" growth in a society of shrinking potentialities--whether by specifying the parameters within which it can occur, by regulating the pace of industrial production, or by selective growth--and of encouraging inner "organic" development.

GROWTH

If the biosphere is a socially owned good, it is in the public interest to maintain it in a healthy, self-renewing state and to prevent or regulate private exploitation. Competing interests of economic growth and the public welfare will, then, become intensified as the threat of ecological imbalance (because of overpopulation, unrestrained industrial and technological growth, depletion of resources, and deterioration of the environment) comes into conflict with the need to solve problems of poverty, unemployment, food production, and the financing of industrial research and development.

The objection to limiting growth as been twofold: (1) that neither the potentials of the environment nor man's biological capacities have been strained--the ceiling on expansion has not yet been reached and in any event keeps rising, and man is adaptable, and (2) that as problems become more serious people bestir themselves to cope with them: measures and techniques (including new technologies, new substitutes) are developed to contain or alleviate them. To these objections are counterposed fixed ecological and biological limits--the limits, e.g., which man's genetic composition places upon his adaptability, the point at which population growth closes more options than it opens, the "delicate balance" (Ward & Dubos) of the ecology.

The classical premises referred to earlier are in some respects distillations of the same assumptions and observations made by contemporary ecologists; in other respects the perspec-

tives are different. Limit is Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound is an imperative imposed by the order of the universe, which is disrupted or destroyed by the technological achievements leading to "higher" civilization. Progress has admittedly lifted man above the brutish state of primitive man, but it is ultimately fatal to the stability of the universe and to human welfare. Equilibrium in the Ionian philosophers is a law of cosmic physics which puts an automatic limit on any practices or any kinds of growth that would disturb the dynamic reciprocity of the constitutent elements of the universe--the counterpart in physics of "delicate balance." Limit and equilibrium in Greek thought are one and the same thing.

The Greek perspective differs from the contemporary in extending the equilibrium-limit equation to human society. Man is an integral part of the community and the community of the cosmos: human ecology and "natural" ecology are therefore of one piece.

The obvious corrective for unrestrained growth is regulation of the pace of production and the kinds of growth which should from time to time be given priority so as to keep within the limits of environmental health and more nearly reflect social need. The substitution of a managed economy for the free market would not, some analysts believe, stifle growth if deflationary techniques were offset by increased government investment in such areas as clean-environment technology, housing, and education; it would, it is alleged, actually help to close the gap between rich and poor.

Limits on industrial and technological growth would also set up the essential preconditions for a more fundamental change--that from "linear" growth to one of inner development. Inner or organic growth, biologically speaking, is the progressive unfolding and maturation of genetic components, a manifestation or actualization of conditions inherent or potential in the organism from the start (the organism, so to speak, as it grows becomes more itself).

To apply biological concepts to social development--to suppose, e.g., that human societies, like organisms, are born, grow to maturity and old age, and then die--is to raise again the ghost of the "social organism." It is not altogether unfortunate, however, that the notion has survived as a metaphor: though it has kept alive the discredited organism-society equation, it has also helped to prepare the way for a wider focus--recognition of the need to achieve a biotic community with man as a member (Maddox), both individually and in his social organizations.

That a human being is an integral part of the environment is obvious enough: his growth and his physiological and psychological wellbeing are the outcome of the interplay or mutuality between his human endowment and the total environment; he is healthy in proportion as he responds adaptively while retaining his individual integrity (Dubos). It is when he combines with other men in creating his own social environment that the relationship between that and the natural environment becomes complex.

Cities and nations develop a life of their own: they create interlocking institutions and reciprocal operations; they

become independent of the environment--indifferent to it or exploitative of it. Their interrelationships are not with the environment but with one another, their growth--measured in population, capital, services, and production--is unrelated to the ecology. The question, then, is whether to continue the present system, with some regulation of the use of energy resources and the environment, on the assumption that it is producing a high standard of living and is in the public interest, or to effect a radical change of direction based on the premise that society must be brought into line with the ecology either as a matter of policy or from the conviction that human society is an integral part of the ecological system.

This conviction is at the heart of the Greek perspective: the cosmos itself is a living organism, of which the polis /city-state/--also an organism--is a natural part. The polis is a corporate entity behaving like a living creature: it has health, strength, and growth, and it has a proper size (Aristotle). The city has a life of its own, but in a very different sense from the modern community: its life is dependent upon, and functionally related to, the cosmic processes. Its nature is determined by the divine world order to which it owes its existence (Aeschylus), and it is the task of the legislator to make human society part of the greater cosmos (Plato). City and cosmos are of one organic order of being, and, since the very nature of the city is determined by the larger order of which it is a part, it is the function of law to ensure that this organic relationship is maintained.

The idea of the organic unity of human society and the cosmos is inseparably linked with the classical premises of limit and equilibrium. If everything, including man's social organizations, are functional components of the cosmic organism, these components must be kept in balance; natural limits will be automatically in force if the stability and order of the whole is not to be disrupted since what is harmful to any part will affect the whole--the unrestrained growth, e.g., of any element at the expense of the others (e.g., Anaximander).

These three premises have their counterpart in the ecologists' sequence (ecosphere--steady state--no growth /or limited growth/) with the crucial exception that cities are not regarded as organisms and, though in a sense they are part of the ecosystem, they are not an organic part; their relationship to it, therefore, is as yet indeterminate. One reason, perhaps, is that the industrial/technological-environment conflict is on a state or national rather than urban scale.

The usual objection to steady state economically is that it would produce stagnation--at best a comfortable, stable, but static society, at worst, as Mumford described the Old World self-enclosure, "the same dismal round," an endless cycle without variety, direction, or progress. To ecologists steady state is, on the contrary, a dynamic equilibrium, a self-renewing system of stability in change in which there is a continuous flow of energy and in which all parts keep pace with one another. The maintenance of this dynamic system should, they believe, be the determining factor in shaping economic and political policy.

Growth, then, is not a maximization of any one segment (e.g., industrial or technological) but an optimization of the processes keeping the entire system in balance. So far from being a static or closed system, it is--in seeking to maintain a multidimensional equilibrium--actually the essential condition for an open society.

The ecologists' position stops short of regarding, as did Greek philosophy, all aspects of human life--social, political, economic--as integral, mutually interactive, components of the ..osystem. Long-term interdisciplinary studies may eventually lay the groundwork for establishing a position closer to the Greek view; of more immediate significance, perhaps, is the recognition that the classical premises of limit, equilibrium, and organic growth are intimately interrelated, and that growth is the maintenance of an even pace of development in a multidimensional system.

FREEDOM

The problem of growth leads directly to that of freedom: whether the controls required to conserve energy resources, protect the environment, and maintain the vitality of the ecosystem curtail freedoms so far taken for granted or lay the groundwork for a different conception of freedom. A laissez-faire economy and two centuries of regarding natural resources as "given" may no longer be affordable: restrictions, e.g., on multinational corporations, on the rate and extent of industrial use of resources, and on land use (road systems, private or industrial construction, waste disposal, water use, etc.), some of which are already in effect, will almost certainly be extended, and the periphery of permissible action will have shrunk.

From a different point of view these "curtailments" of freedom are enhancements of the right of the whole people to its land and resources: the less damage to the environment, the greater the chance to use and enjoy it in the future. The public good, reflected in restrictive legislation, should take precedence over private freedom.

The public good--or, more accurately, the context of the community--is uppermost in Greek thinking on freedom. The individual can enjoy his freedom only within the limits set by the community's interests (limits, which in turn, derive their power from the idea of the state as part of the divine order). Since he owes his whole physical and spiritual existence to the community, he has a commit-

ment to it from which he cannot free himself without forfeiting his own nature (Pohlenz). This is less the idea that the "real" self may be something wider than the individual--e.g., a tribe, church, or state (I. Berlin) than that society is logically prior to the individual (Aristotle), and that his freedom, as well as other aspects of his humanness, is contingent upon it.

In Greek thought limit is the context in which freedom becomes possible. The contemporary concept of freedom has been, on the contrary, release from inherited interdependencies of the traditional community (Nisbet), freedom from government "interference" in the operation of a free market, and freedom for self-realization and self-gratification--an attitude fostered by a consuming economy and leading to a subcultural form in the self-absorption and hedonism of the 1960's. But release from contexts of community can only result in aloneness and exposure to one's anxieties and passions (Nisbet, Etzioni) and in abandoning certain norms without substituting others (Etzioni). What is imperative is not release from the community but reintegration with it (Nisbet); to become freer one must not liberate himself from his surroundings but improve them, since the quality of his environment is of primary importance in determining individual development (Delgado). The improvement of the environment--to move to the more inclusive ecological level--depends in turn on environmental limits and government controls: these, therefore, are not merely compatible with freedom but are productive of the only genuine freedom (Commoner). Freedom and self-realization are products, then, not only of social, but of ecological, limita-

tions--realizable to the degree that these limitations are understood and become the substratum of one's personal life, his social institutions, and his government's policy.

JUSTICE

For some time the focus of justice has been on individual rights--e.g., equality of opportunity, or, more recently, equality of result, a principle of redress for individuals for undeserved inequalities (Rawls, Bell). The extension of justice to social and economic inequalities in the case of individuals is still so precarious that to lose its momentum would be extremely unfortunate. It is clear nonetheless that the focus must now be on the general welfare, and that, unless the implications of unrestrained growth for justice are faced, recent successes in expanding individual justice will fall short of their potential.

Justice in Greek philosophy was conceived on the broadest possible scale: it was a universal law of physics, and it was immanent in human life (Jaeger, on Solon), becoming in the course of the fifth century B. C. all-pervasive in the life of the state and the individual--the basis of society and, in Plato, a principle regulative of the whole of human life (Del Vecchio).

The word itself (dike) meant world order and the principle which kept it inviolate (Anaximander, Aeschylus). Projected from the life of the city-state upon the life of the universe, "due share" (the basic meaning of dike) of the law court was transformed by Ionian philosophers into the reciprocal interchange of opposites (e.g., hot-cold, wet-dry) on a cosmic scale--a cyclical coming-to-be and passing-away of elemental substance or matter. Since excess or "encroachment" of either of the opposites was con-

timually inhibited, the dynamic equilibrium or steady state which constituted the global process was automatically maintained (Jaeger and Guthrie, on Anaximander). Heraclitus' system was different, but here too continuous change was contained in strict limits. Justice, then, combined two basic classical principles--limit and equilibrium.

During the fifth century justice moved from a preoccupation with equality (isonomia: equality before the law, a balance among social classes, the right of selection by lot and to hold office) and concord (homonoia) to egalitarianism, supported frequently by appeals to nature, both physical and human (Vlastos, Ehrenberg, Guthrie, Hall). Plato's conceptions of justice are complex and shifting (e.g., from the Republic to the Laws): what is of immediate interest here is his description of justice as dwelling in the proportion between the various parts which comprise the organic whole (Del Vecchio), the proportional equality of giving due measure to each according to nature--i.e., what is fitting to each (Laws), his idea of justice as the balancing of all classes in the political control of the whole state, and his view that justice is the natural state of the soul as health is of the body.

A number of reflections on contemporary justice emerge from the Greek perspectives. Foremost is the assumption that justice must take into account human ecology on an all-inclusive plane--the physical as well as the social environment. It is the view most recently expressed by Hans Morgenthau: "To know what is just in a specific case, we must know what principle governs the

universe." It involves knowing what regulates the environment and keeps it in self-renewing health and, consequently, a raising of sights from private property rights to those of the public demesne--from the principle suum cuique (to each his own) to suum populo (to the public its own). The Greek conception of justice as a natural state, in particular a natural state characterised by limit and equilibrium, does not move a purely scientific construct into the realm of law and ethics (in Ionia [see above] it was the reverse); justice is, rather, inherent in the universe--the physical and human world alike. It is a condition like that of health: things will operate smoothly unless by the excess of some constituent part their natural bounds are "transgressed." This view is not unlike that underlying our environmental-impact approach, extended to cover not only a local ecological system but the "strip mining" of the social environment.

Conceptions of justice toward the latter part of the fifth century and the early part of the fourth were close to our current emphases--the primacy of the individual and distributive justice (e.g., according to merit or need) in which the balance is tipped toward equity (unequal distribution of goods to equalize the advantage of the least favored: Bell) rather than universal equality. It is the perspective of a century or more earlier, however, which highlights the kind of emphasis required by the economic and environmental exigencies of the near future. These exigencies point to the need to focus upon aggregate rather than distributive justice--i.e., upon what concerns the common

good.

The common good now embraces man-environment relationships on a newly intensified and expanded plane. It is not merely a matter of guaranteeing equal access to, and use of, the world's diminishing resources, but of conceiving human welfare as a product of a natural ecosystem and of justice as the maintenance of that system in a state of dynamic equilibrium that will ensure its continuing life. It may be that people will gain more in the long run through the equality of aggregate justice than the equity of distributive justice even though aggregate justice may not take into account differences in individual contributions (e.g., in energy or talent) or compensate for undeserved inequalities, as distributive justice seeks to do (cf. Sampson). A vital, high-quality university, e.g., offers its members more in status and in a climate conducive to productivity even when inequities in rank or salary exist than would an ailing institution in which such inequities have been largely eliminated. Ideally, of course, there should be both quality and equity, but until that is attained the higher priority should be the level of excellence and the vitality of the institution. A recent study (Deutsch) suggests, too, that equity may be characteristic of a society that is impersonal, competitive, and maximizing and may foster the introduction of economic values in all aspects of human life, whereas equality appears to favor cooperation. Plato's view is consistent with aggregate, universal justice: what is just is equal, not what is equal is just.

IMPLICATIONS

The recognition that the ecology is a "delicate balance" of interdependencies in the biological world (Ward & Dubos) is becoming the conceptual framework within which we look at the natural environment and the focal point of any consideration of the environmental impact of growth--technological, economic, or population. This is the root of Commoner's position: that the ecosystem should dictate the goals and standards of the productive and economic systems. With this Aeschylus would be in agreement (Prometheus Bound), and Greek thought would be sympathetic to his view that all human activity is governed by the interaction of these three systems. The Greeks, however, would see everything as integral parts of a single system.

The implications of this holistic view are radical: they touch every aspect of human life--growth, freedom, justice, the public good, and the quality of life, and they do so from the perspective that they are all interconnected. Though there is no agreement today even on the need to limit growth, there is an increasing awareness that unrestricted growth is eutrophic--that it is adversely related to the public good not only because of depletion of resources or environmental damage but because a one-dimensional, profit-maximizing expansion precludes the goal of optimizing social values and is in inverse proportion to the quality of life. Multidimensional growth implies, in turn, maintaining a proportional rate of growth--i.e., a steady state in which no one element or factor is expanding at the expense of the others.

It is apparent that any kind of steady state involves restrictions on freedom, both corporate and individual, but it is likely that the probability of governmental controls will be accepted in the spirit of willingness to forego some freedoms in order to gain certain advantages and in the assurance that the democratic tradition of individualism will not be seriously circumscribed. The prevailing Greek conception of limitations on freedom was not a graft of unavoidable restrictions on the rootstock of individualism; it was, rather, rooted in the conviction that no genuine freedom was possible except within the bounds of cosmic and community limitations and that, in fact, it was through these limitations that one achieved his humanness.

From the Greek point of view, our current conceptions of justice, like those of freedom, are unrelated to the natural world and man's part in it. The form that justice took in, e.g., Ionian philosophy is not important; what is of interest is the idea that the laws of nature and the ecosystem must provide the context for "human" justice. The implication is not merely that the ecosystem is a public good or that aggregate justice should take precedence over distributive justice but that justice, like health, is the maintenance of a natural state. We have only recently begun to realize the full extent and the complex interdependencies of that state; when it is accepted as the context of justice, advances in our knowledge of it will be accompanied by extensions in the application of justice--perhaps along the lines of land use and environmental impact legislation. These extensions, however, would not be made in piecemeal fashion but

would arise from a more profound understanding of what constitutes the public good and how integrally related it is to every facet of the environment.

The public good, then, will need to be predicated on premises quite different from those prevailing now. Stability-in-change will appear not as lack of progress but as an essential precondition for inner development. It will be seen as the need to redirect the economy from the growth in mass that eventuates in megastructures, urban and corporate, to the provision of expanded public services. It will be regarded as a rejection of a one-dimensional, consumer-oriented way of life for one that allows for differentiation and cultural diversity. Above all, it should provide a common purpose and direction--a goal of progressive awareness of the limits set by the requirements of environmental health that is sufficiently compelling to enlist public support for increased governmental controls and sufficiently broad and flexible to facilitate keeping a balance of competing interests--a balance that must be struck again and again as circumstances vary (Kariel) and as our understanding advances.

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